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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 29

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/287)

Draft resolution A/58/L.4

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico comes to this highest international forum to reiterate its rejection of the application of unilateral laws or measures imposing an economic blockade against any nation. My country, moreover, has always rejected the use of coercive measures as a means of applying pressure in international relations.

Mexico bases its foreign relations on the principles of international law that govern the fellowship among nations, and which are also enshrined in our Constitution. These principles include the self-determination of peoples, non-intervention, the peaceful resolution of disputes, the prohibition of the threat or use of force, the legal equality of States, international cooperation in development and the struggle to achieve international peace and security.

For the foregoing reasons, the Mexican Government has unequivocally voiced its rejection of the imposition of political, economic or military sanctions that have not been explicitly approved by the Security Council or by the General Assembly.

My delegation has rejected the economic, trade and financial blockade imposed unilaterally against Cuba and has for more than a decade now consistently supported all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly regarding the need to end that blockade.

My country believes that the Helms-Burton Act is contrary to the norms of international law, a position that is in full accord with the opinion of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, issued on 4 June 1996.

For that reason, Mexico promulgated an Act to protect trade and investment from foreign norms that contravene international law, which came into force on 24 October 1996, in order to check the adverse extraterritorial impact of foreign norms that impinge upon Mexico's free trade with other countries and which violate international law to the detriment of any State.

In August 1999, Mexico supported Cuba's membership in the Latin American Integration Association and, in May 2001, signed an agreement with that country for the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments, among other measures.

More recently, at a meeting on joint cooperation for development between Mexico and Cuba, held on 14 and 15 October in Mexico City, a programme of

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technical and scientific cooperation was established for the period 2003 to 2005.

The blockade against Cuba must be brought to an end. Over the last decade, the General Assembly has exhorted Member States on repeated occasions to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures of an extraterritorial nature. At the current session of the General Assembly, Mexico, for the twelfth time, will renew its support for the resolution calling for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, as unilateral measures adversely affecting the sovereignty and trade freedom of States are in contravention of my country's foreign policy and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. In accord with our steadfast position of principle, and as we have been doing since 1992, Mexico will vote in favour of draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.4.

Mr. Aboutahir (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The Group of 77, at their first summit in Havana in 2000, called for the end of the economic embargo against Cuba. In this context, I would like, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to reiterate the position of the Group of 77 on the agenda item before us today, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

We have read the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/287) on this item. As already emphasized at past sessions of the General Assembly by the Chairman of the Group of 77, it is important to highlight the fact that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba is a unilateral act, the extraterritorial effects of which have no validity in international law. It is therefore necessary that the embargo be lifted to allow a free flow of international trade.

The South Summit of the Group of 77 held in April 2000 expressed its conviction that national laws should not have extraterritorial applicability. While underlining the importance of North-South relations, the Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate the following points made at the South Summit.

First, that the elimination of laws and regulations with adverse extraterritorial effects and other forms of unilateral economic coercive measures is imperative, as they are inconsistent with the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the principles of the multilateral trading system.

Secondly, the Group of 77 reiterates its concern about the impact of economic sanctions on the civilian population and the development capacity of targeted countries. It therefore calls on the international community to exhaust all possible peaceful methods of dialogue before resorting to sanctions, which should only be considered as a last resort. If there is no alternative to sanctions, then sanctions may only be imposed in strict conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, sanctions must contain clear objectives, time frames and provisions for regular review, along with precise conditions for their lifting, and must never be used as punishment or other form of retribution.

Thirdly, the Group of 77 would like to recall the South Summit's sincere appeal to the Government of the United States of America to lift the economic embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba since 1960. That embargo, which has gone on far too long, serves no other purpose than to preserve a state of tension between two neighbouring countries and to impose untold hardship and suffering on the people of Cuba, especially its women and children.

Finally, the South Summit emphasized its conviction that replacing the embargo with renewed dialogue and cooperation would undoubtedly contribute not only towards the removal of tension between the two countries, but would also promote meaningful exchanges and partnerships between those countries, already closely linked by history and geography and a common destiny.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Resolutions have been adopted by the General Assembly for 11 consecutive years urging all countries to comply with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles enshrined in international legal instruments by repealing or invalidating all laws and measures with extraterritorial effects that impinge on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and freedom of trade and navigation. Regrettably, the country concerned, continuing to ignore the just demand of the international community, has failed to implement those resolutions.

To force a country to give up its independently chosen road of development, even attempting to overthrow its Government by means of embargoes and sanctions, runs counter to the purposes and principles

enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms guiding international relations. It is also a distortion and violation of the principle of democracy.

The embargo and sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba have been going on for more than 40 years. The United States claims that these measures are designed to improve so-called democracy and human rights. In reality, those measures have seriously constrained Cuba in its nation-building efforts to eradicate poverty, improve the living standard of its people and promote economic and social development. The result is a grave violation of the fundamental freedoms and human rights of the Cuban people, including the right to life and development.

The extraterritorial effects of the financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba violates international law and the principles, objectives and rules of international trade. It also runs counter to the principle of free trade encouraged by the United States itself. Currently, 78 countries have suffered economic losses as a result of the embargo. The international community should be seriously concerned about the embargo and sanctions and demand their immediate end.

The sovereign equality of States and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs are at the heart of the norms guiding present-day international relations. It has been the consistent position of the Chinese Government that the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations must be adhered to in efforts to promote the democratization of international laws. Acts such as the rich bullying the poor and the strong bullying the weak are certainly not acceptable to the international community.

We believe that it is the inviolable sovereign right of all countries to choose their political and social systems and mode of development and to administer their internal affairs in accordance with their national situation. Differences between States should be resolved through dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect. For this reason, the Chinese Government opposes the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. We support the Cuban Government and people in their endeavour to safeguard national independence and State sovereignty.

While it claims to be a democratic country that listens to the will of the people, in fact, for 11 years the United States has acted against the will of the people and the will of the international community. It is our hope that the United States will keep pace with the times, replacing confrontation with dialogue, embargo and sanctions with communication and exchange, and earnestly implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. China supports the draft resolution submitted by Cuba under the current agenda item.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica. We join with those who have spoken before in supporting the need to bring to an end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. We are greatly concerned at its detrimental effects on the Cuban people.

The CARICOM States wish to reaffirm the importance that we attach to the strict observance of the principles of international law and to freedom of trade and navigation. We remain opposed to the extraterritorial application of national legislation that seeks to impose artificial barriers to trade and cooperation, and which is contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Our member States, in keeping with our policy of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter, maintain friendly relations with Cuba and with the United States of America, with whom we have mutually beneficial programmes of cooperation and trade.

In accordance with the fundamental principles that guide the foreign policy of the Caribbean Community, the foreign ministers of CARICOM, at their meeting in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in May 2003, reaffirmed that engaging Cuba and pursuing dialogue with its Government at the highest level are in the best interests of the Cuban people.

Accordingly, we reiterate our call for a constructive process of dialogue and normalization of relations, which we believe would be in the interests of all parties. For us in the Caribbean, it would remove a source of tension and conflict and improve the climate

for peaceful development and cooperation in our region.

The CARICOM delegations support the contents of the draft resolution that is before the General Assembly in A/58/L.4 and we will vote in favour of its adoption.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): Malaysia is fundamentally opposed to all forms of unilateral economic, commercial and financial sanctions and embargoes. Malaysia therefore joins the rest of the international community in calling, yet again, for an immediate end to the embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba and its people.

The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", contained in document A/58/287, has clearly shown that many countries do not agree with the policy carried out by the United States. Malaysia shares their views.

For many years now, this Assembly has consistently adopted, by an overwhelming majority, resolutions calling for an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba. The adoption of such a resolution has clearly and unambiguously shown the international community's total rejection of the unilateral action taken by the United States against Cuba. The policy adopted by the most powerful nation in the world against its small neighbour is most perplexing. This policy is said to be intended to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy. Yet the prolonged economic, commercial and financial embargo has caused untold suffering to the Cuban population, particularly the elderly, women and innocent children. In spite of Cuba's well-known resilience and valiant efforts at ensuring its survival as an independent and sovereign nation, the sanctions have seriously impeded Cuba's socio-economic development potential. It has affected the Cuban people's material, social and cultural well-being.

This unilateral policy of the United States runs counter to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. It has completely ignored the current trend towards calls for increased understanding and dialogue among nations and civilizations. Malaysia reiterates its strong belief that, even in the most difficult of situations, differences among nations could be better resolved through dialogue and negotiations, rather than through isolation and direct confrontation. Therefore, we urge the United States to end the policy and engage in serious dialogue to resolve its problems with Cuba.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has also consistently reiterated the developing countries' collective rejection of this policy. NAM has expressed its deep concern at the extraterritorial application of laws, in particular the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, on Cuba and the other legislative measures designed to intensify the blockade. Consistent with this position, Malaysia joined other NAM member countries at the thirteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of NAM in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003 to call upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The application of laws by the United States, which are intended to, inter alia, restrict Cuba's access to much-needed markets, capital, technology and investment, in order to exert pressure on Cuba to change its political and economic system or orientation, is not consistent with the universally accepted principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, World Trade Organization principles and relevant United Nations resolutions. It is discriminatory in nature and undermines the principles of sovereign equality of States, fundamental human rights and good-neighbourliness among States.

The economic blockade against Cuba is indeed a violation of international law. It also violates the right of the people of Cuba to life, to well-being and to development. The embargo has no doubt caused tremendous economic damage and aggravated the plight of the Cuban people.

Malaysia once again reaffirms its commitment to the respect for fundamental principles of sovereign equality among States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation. My delegation urges the international community to continue with its efforts to bring about an early end to the unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We sincerely appeal to the United States to heed the voice of many nations, which do not favour its unilateral policy and action.

In support of the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the promotion of

freedom of trade, Malaysia, as in the previous years, will vote in favour of the draft resolution that will be introduced by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Siv (United States of America) (*spoke in Spanish*): As it has done in past years, the Government of Cuba has introduced a draft resolution on the trade embargo of the United States against Cuba whereby it intends to affix blame upon the United States for the economic difficulties Cuba has encountered and to distract attention from its deplorable track record in human rights.

We stand firmly opposed to this resolution. Whatever opinion one may have about the embargo, it must be clear that this is a bilateral issue between the United States and Cuba. It is important to bear in mind that the embargoes were imposed after the illegal large-scale expropriation of United States properties for which the Cuban Government has never offered any indemnification whatsoever. This embargo has been reaffirmed by successive United States Administrations with a view to keeping the pressure on for restoring democracy in Cuba. This is not a blockade, as Havana asserts in its official pronouncements, inasmuch as it does not affect trade with other nations. Cuba is free to trade with any other country in the world, a freedom which, indeed, it is exercising. Moreover, over 175,000 United States citizens travelled legally to Cuba last year, using regular airline services linking the United States and Cuba.

The truth is that what adversely affects Cuba's trade with other countries is not the embargo, but its lack of credit solvency, which in turn stems from the fact that it does not pay its debts and owes billions of dollars in loans and arrears. It is not the embargo, but rather the failed economic policy of the communist regime that has brought trouble to Cubans and has destroyed what used to be one of the most advanced economies in the region.

A study carried out jointly with the Cuban Research Institute and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has reached the conclusion that Cuba, to restore its battered economy, must relax the restrictions it is imposing on small businesses. In order to achieve effective growth, Cuba must deregulate, something Castro cannot do without giving up his authority over decision-making. We have offered to modify the embargo in exchange for reforms. In May 2002, the United States challenged Castro's Government to undertake political and economic reform, particularly to permit free and fair elections to the National Assembly. We also are urging the Cuban Government to dare to open its economy, to allow independent trade unions, and to put an end to practices that discriminate against Cuban workers.

President Bush has stated clearly that, if these specific reforms were to be carried out, he would prevail upon Congress to alleviate restrictions on trade and travel between the United States and Cuba. Far from initiating a political opening, however, the Cuban Government carried out a brutal repression in March 2003, sentencing 75 opposition militants, including representatives of the independent media, economists, trade union members and human rights activists, to sentences ranging up to 28 years in prison.

A variety of acts of political repression have struck down those who have militated for peaceful change throughout the period of this Cuban administration. Havana has shown no interest in carrying out the necessary economic and political reforms. Castro remains obstinately opposed to any political opening and continues to deprive the Cuban people of the most elementary of human rights as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Cuban Government characterizes support for this draft resolution as tantamount to support of its regime and repressive policies, as it has done during past years. For all these reasons, the United States stands firmly opposed to this mistaken draft resolution.

(*spoke in English*)

In the 1980s, President Reagan reflected on United States — Soviet relations by using a Russian saying "trust, but verify". On Communists and dictators like those in Havana, I say "never trust, always verify". The best day for Cuba is the day when the Cuban people open their ears and hear the truth, when they open their eyes and see freedom, when they open their mouths and say "Viva Cuba libre". Cuba's best day is when the Cuban people have terminated Castro's evil communist dictatorial regime and said to him "hasta la vista, baby".

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): The Government of Viet Nam consistently pursues a foreign policy based on the principles of respect for the

independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations. We support the legitimate right of every State to exist, free from external interference, subversion or coercion. We stand for non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means and renouncing the threat or use of force.

In this spirit and from our firsthand experience, the delegation of Viet Nam has frequently joined others in this forum and elsewhere in voicing our consistent and vehement opposition to the use of sanctions for whatever reason or pretext against any sovereign State. The political motive of undermining a State is legally and morally wrong, and more often than not proves to be a failure. Sanctions, blockades and embargoes only bring suffering to bear upon innocent people, particularly old people, women and children.

While welcoming the recent lifting of sanctions against other countries, we cannot help wondering why the unilateral embargo against Cuba has not been lifted? If economic damage was the intention, the objective has been achieved. The embargo continues to affect the economic development and social well-being of the Cuban people and has caused significant losses of approximately $72 billion in all sectors of the Cuban economy. After more than four decades of existence, it could be entered in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the longest-lasting embargo in human history.

Again the question is why? Is the Republic of Cuba a security threat to its big neighbour? Are the 11 million Cuban people on that tiny island able to do harm to the world's hyper-Power? The answer is obviously "no". In 1959, the Cuban people stood up as one and rid themselves of foreign domination. They took their destiny in their own hands and exercised their right to self-determination. Through the long years of hardships, attacks — a total of 700 in the 14 months from November 1961 to January 1963 — threats and harassment from the outside, the Cuban people have stayed the course of development, holding their heads high, building a system of which they can be proud. Cuba has 70,000 doctors, of which more than 3,000 famous ones are helping other developing countries. Child mortality has been reduced from the rate of 60 per 1,000 before 1959 to 6.5 per 1,000. Education is free and universal. We warmly salute the achievements that they have recorded in the last 40 years.

All the peace-, freedom- and justice-loving peoples in the world whole-heartedly support the people and Government of Cuba in their national construction and defence. The most eloquent evidence of that is manifested by the fact that the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" has been on the working agenda of the General Assembly every year since its forty-sixth session and has consistently received the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States, as well as that of many other international organizations and agencies, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/287). Recently, at the XXV Assembly of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences, which ended on 31 October 2003, 25 member States of the Council addressed an open letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressing their demand that the blockade and embargo against Cuba should be put to an immediate end. We share the view that this 43-year-long embargo, with the extraterritorial application of domestic law against the tiny island, not only contravenes international law and the most basic norms of international relations but flagrantly violates the fundamental purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as well.

Viet Nam holds the view that the dispute between the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba should be resolved through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of mutual respect, respect for independence and sovereignty and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Although, as the old saying goes, "thick ice is not due to just one cold day", the dispute and mistrust between the two countries cannot simply be allowed to wait to be resolved; it requires goodwill and, above all, determination on the part of the United States Administration. In that vein, we welcome every effort to that effect by the parties concerned.

I wish to reiterate my Government's continued and unwavering support, cooperation and solidarity with the people and Government of Cuba. We will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.4 and hope that the United Nations will undertake concrete measures and initiatives so that the adopted resolution will be implemented in order to put an end to the hostile policies and acts against the Republic of Cuba. The longer the embargo goes on, the

more suffering the people of Cuba must bear. Not a single person of conscience can accept that prospect.

To this day, I remember my father's words spoken more than 50 years ago. He said, "Son, if you cannot love, do not just hate because hate brings mutual suffering — but you are the first to suffer". I wish to share this in the spirit of the commandment to love thy neighbour, drawn straight from the Holy Bible, as I believe love is always reciprocal.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.4.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba must be lifted. Under the 1948 Geneva Convention, the blockade against Cuba qualifies as a crime of genocide. The blockade is a legal aberration. It violates the Charter of the United Nations. It is detrimental to international trade and hinders free navigation. It goes so far as to penalize entrepreneurs from other countries for investing in Cuba.

The crude and disrespectful tone used in this Hall just minutes ago by the representative of the United States compels me to depart from my text. I can understand the murmuring in the Hall that followed his crude remarks. I believe that so low and disrespectful an attack can only be the result of the desperation and isolation of the Government of the United States in its policy towards Cuba. The representative of the United States showed a lack of respect and indulged in personal attacks. But Cuba does not emulate such methods. It does not try to hide the lack of arguments by using disrespectful adjectives. It does not use empty epithets in place of arguments. I must therefore assure the Assembly that the representative of the United States has lied, and I will prove it. It is my duty to denounce those lies because the Assembly has the right to know the truth. The Assembly deserves respect, which means that the representatives of countries should behave in the Hall in accordance with the minimum rules of respect and good manners. I counted 15 lies or disrespectful attacks, on which I will comment briefly. I cannot fail to take the opportunity to reject them.

First, the representative of the United States has said that the embargo against Cuba is justified on the basis of what he has called Cuba's regrettable human rights record. That is a lie. The United States does not have the moral authority or the right to judge the human rights situation in Cuba. It should attend to its own situation. It should deal with the human rights violations that take place in its own country and the ones it provokes outside its border.

Secondly, he has said that the embargo against Cuba is a bilateral affair. That is a lie. The embargo impedes business with and investments in Cuba around the world through the application of the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, which I will address later in my statement.

Thirdly, he has said that the embargo was established after the expropriations. That is a lie. The measures of the economic embargo and other forms of economic war against Cuba date back before the nationalization that was justly undertaken by the Cuban revolution.

Fourthly, he has said that Cuba did not offer compensation. That is a lie. The Cuban nationalization laws established compensation. In fact, that compensation was accepted by all foreign owners in Cuba, including Europeans, Canadians and Latin Americans; everyone except for citizens of the United States, whose Government prohibited them from accepting compensation.

Fifthly, he has said that the embargo is aimed at bringing freedom and democracy to Cuba. That is a lie. The embargo is aimed at turning Cuba back into a colony of the United States.

He has also said that last year, 175,000 United States citizens travelled legally to Cuba. That is a lie. A majority of them did so in violation of their own country's laws. Moreover, if the United States is not afraid of them travelling to Cuba — because the Government does not allow it — then why are there now more than 2,000 American citizens facing legal proceedings?

He has said that Cuba does not pay its debts. That is a lie.

He has said that the poverty of the Cuban people is not a result of the embargo, and that the embargo is not an obstacle. He has lied. On the other hand, it is true that we are a poor third-world country, but there is not one Cuban citizen who lacks medical care, as is the

case in the United States, where there are 44 million people who have no right to health-care services.

He has said that brutal repression was imposed in Cuba. In keeping with Cuban laws, mercenaries who receive money from the United States and who work there for the embargo and to promote subversion have been punished.

He has referred to the President of Cuba, the leader Fidel Castro, as a dictator. This Assembly knows very well that the Government of the United States and President Bush are attempting to impose a fascist dictatorship on a global scale.

Finally, he has referred to the Cuban Government as an evil and dictatorial regime, to which it wanted to say "Hasta la vista, baby". Never have such disrespectful words been heard in this Assembly. Cuba accepts the possibility of differences of opinion, differing arguments and different ideologies. But it believes there should be a minimum of respect shown to the delegates and countries represented here.

I regret that the representative of the United States will not have in his entire lifetime the right or the slightest opportunity to say "Hasta la vista, baby" to the people of Cuba. It is the people of Cuba, with the support of the international community, who will say "Hasta la vista to the blockade; hasta la vista to genocide". And in response to his disrespectful comments, we are not going to say "Hasta la vista" to our leader, our President; what we are going to say to him is "Patria o muerte; venceremos".

I will continue my statement to state that the embargo is a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. The only human rights violations committed in Cuba are the ones generated and provoked against our people by the embargo and the ones committed by the United States at the Guantanamo Naval Base, which it occupies against our will on our territory. It is also deleterious to the rights of United States citizens, the rights of Cubans living in the United States and the rights of nationals of other countries who wish to trade with and invest freely in Cuba.

I am not saying a single word from this rostrum against the people of the United States, who we consider as friends, who we do not blame. We believe that the people of the United States are also victims, like us, of a cruel, senseless policy pursued by its Government. I do not blame the people; I blame their Government, which subordinates its policy on Cuba to the corrupt interests of a minority of Cuban-born mobsters living in the city of Miami.

The embargo is the greatest obstacle to Cuba's social and economic development, and I reaffirm that here, refuting the claims of the representative of the United States. It has caused our country the loss of more than $72 billion, no less than $1.6 billion per year, in addition to the aggression, the invasions and the more than 600 assassination plots against our head of State. How many shortages and hardships would we have been spared without the embargo? How much farther would Cuba have gone in its noble endeavour of equality and social justice had it not had to deal with this ruthless and relentless blockade for more than four decades?

If the Government of the United States is so certain that the Cuban Government and authorities — the historic leadership of the Cuban Revolution — do not have the support of the people, then why does it not lift the embargo? If it says that we are using it as a pretext, then why does it not take that pretext away from us? Why does it not lift the embargo? Why does it not allow United States citizens to visit Cuba?

The embargo is a cruel and absurd policy that has no support within or outside the United States. Last year, 173 Member States voted against the embargo in the General Assembly. They understand that the crime being committed against Cuba today could very well be committed against any other country tomorrow.

The notion that the Cubans who are living in the United States support the embargo is erroneous; I state that here. Only a corrupt and greedy minority that has not hesitated to organize and carry out terrorist actions against our people is interested in keeping the embargo in place. This minority dreams of Cuba's return to the hands of United States troops; it dreams of revenge and pillage. President Bush — and the truth must be told in this Hall — is hostage to the spurious interests of that Cuban minority living in Miami. He owes them the presidency, controversially won in 2000 by the close margin of one vote in the United States Supreme Court.

The President of Cuba was re-elected in our National Assembly, made up of representatives elected by direct and secret ballot, throughout the entire country, in elections in which more than 95 per cent of the population participated. The President of the United

States was declared President by the Supreme Court in the midst of a scandal that left the country leaderless for more than a month.

However, a growing mass — increasingly less silent and more active — objects to this policy that curtails normal relations with their families and with Cuba.

The United States must recognize that the embargo is morally and ethically unjustifiable. It must recognize that it is a failure, that it causes its own isolation. We Cubans, far from surrendering, are more steadfast and independent; far from dividing, we have united; far from feeling discouraged, we have found new strength to defend our sovereignty and our right to freedom.

The United States must repeal the Helms-Burton Act. It has no right to impose its laws on the rest of the world. It has no right to dictate to Cubans how their country should be organized. It has no right to finance and organize subversion in Cuba. It has no right to sanction entrepreneurs from other countries for having ties with Cuba.

The United States must repeal the Torricelli Act. It has no right to prevent vessels from other countries from calling on Cuban ports. It has no right to prohibit the subsidiaries of United States companies based in third countries from trading with Cuba, especially since that prohibition is in violation of the laws of those countries in which the companies are domiciled.

The United States must allow Cuba to export to its territory. There is no reason for closing off our exports of sugar, nickel, tobacco, seafood, vaccines and biotech products, computer software and other Cuban products.

The United States must allow Cuba to import freely from its territory, and not only foodstuffs, but everything else as well, except for weapons in which we are not interested. It must eliminate the absurd restrictions that currently hinder and considerably restrict the sales of farm produce to Cuba.

The United States must allow its citizens to travel freely to Cuba. Why is the United States Administration chasing after them? Is it by any chance afraid that they may learn the truth? It is not ridiculous to go after a grandmother going to Cuba to ride on her bicycle? Why does the representative of the United States not explain in this Hall the case of Mrs. Joan Slote, age 74, fined $8,500 for having gone to Cuba? What really is democratic, to respect the clear and majority-based vote of both the House and the Senate, or stubbornly and shortsightedly to defend vulgar electoral interests?

The United States must stop preventing the free exchange of ideas. It must stop hindering visits by Cuban scientists, athletes and artists to this country. It must allow Cuba to acquire top-of-the-line equipment and technology for Internet access.

The United States must allow Cuba to use the dollar for its external trade and other commercial transactions. By what right does it seize Cuba's payments to companies or Governments of third countries?

The United States must eliminate the absurd prohibition preventing the import into its territory of products manufactured in third countries if these products contain Cuban raw materials. It must allow the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to grant credits to Cuba. In this hemisphere, often those credits were stolen in the past by corrupt presidents and then later on deposited in American banks. That has not happened and never will happen in the case of Cuba!

The United States must authorize its banks to make loans to Cuba and allow its enterprises to trade with and freely invest in our country. Are these not private banks and enterprises?

The United States Government must prevent the Bacardi company from stealing the Havana Club rum brand name. Its Government should not act as an interested party, and I spell that out clearly, in a conflict involving trademarks and patents with Cuba.

The United States must return the frozen assets to Cuba and prevent Cuban money that is being frozen in banks in this country from being stolen by influential traffickers and greedy, petty lawyers from Miami.

The United States must return to Cuba the territory it is currently occupying against our will, namely the Guantanamo naval base. It must repeal the Cuban Adjustment Act and accept our proposal to engage in extensive cooperation to eliminate smuggling of aliens.

The United States must release the five young Cubans who are unjustly imprisoned, violating their

most basic human rights in this country, and go after the terrorists roaming the streets of Miami.

Finally, the United States must cease its aggression against Cuba. It must recognize Cuba's right to self-determination, free self-determination. It must let Cubans live in peace. It must recognize that from 1 January 1959 on — soon that will make 45 years — Cuba has been a free and independent country.

President Bush said a few days ago that Cuba is not going to change on its own. He is mistaken. Cuba is changing every day. There is no more profound and permanent change than that of a revolution. Cuba will change, yes, but increasingly towards more revolution and more socialism, towards more equality, more justice, more freedom and more solidarity. And so it will be over President Bush's objection because, as was said over 123 years ago by the apostle of our independence, José Martí: "Before relinquishing the endeavour to make our homeland free and prosperous, the southern sea will merge with the northern sea, and a snake will be born out of an eagle's egg."

The President of the United States went on to say: "but Cuba must change". I must pause at that phrase, because it entails an inherent threat of new sanctions against our country, as Cubans have understood it. The distinguished President of the United States must recall that he is the tenth to make such threats over these four decades of blockade and aggressions that Cuba has managed to overcome.

He should also know that his current difficulties pale against those that he would have had if he had mistakenly gotten into a tango with Cuba. He should know there is no human or natural force capable of causing the Cubans to give up their dreams of justice and freedom.

Our being noble must not be mistaken for weakness. Our absence of hatred must not be confused with fear. Our willingness to engage in dialogue must not be mistaken for the illusion of a surrender by a people that has not been defeated. There should be no mistake that Cuba could at any time be dominated. It would be very costly, indeed, for the aggressor.

Finally, I ask the Assembly, on behalf of the generous and courageous people back home in my country who are closely following what you all will decide today, to vote in favour of the draft resolution in A/58/L.4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

I am asking you to forgive the words full of hatred and bereft of respect pronounced here by my adversary and I reiterate my respect to you and my thanks and those of my people.

I ask you to vote in favour of Cuba's rights, that is, the right of Cuba, which today is also everyone's right. I thank you.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. When the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/19 in 1992 on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", Member States did so in recognition of the fact that the embargo violates the principles of the United Nations Charter and the freedom of trade and international navigation. Thus, those States which had such laws or measures were urged to take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate them as soon as possible. However, it is disheartening to note that to date no significant measures have been taken towards lifting the embargo. Instead, in recent years we have witnessed the strengthening of the embargo and the broadening of its extraterritorial implementation, as institutionalized by the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, which in addition to violating the sovereignty of third-party States and international law, are continuing to cause serious damage to the Cuban economy.

The adverse effect on the population of Cuba cannot be overemphasized. The embargo has caused, and continues to cause, major damage to the Cuban people's material and spiritual welfare, imposing serious obstacles on their economic, cultural and social development. It has affected the Cuban people's full realization of their basic human rights, including the right to health and education, sectors that have been seriously affected by embargo regulations. Indeed, the embargo has made it extremely difficult for the country to purchase the food and medicines needed to sustain the lives of the Cuban people. It has deprived the Cuban people of the opportunities and benefits derived from free trade and peaceful coexistence.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders, among others, resolved to create an environment at both the national and global levels which is conducive

to economic development and to the fight against poverty. In order to live up to the expectations of the Declaration, we, the Member States, must make sure that no country is left behind in the fight to eliminate poverty.

Clearly, the embargo is an obstacle to Cuba's efforts to implement the Millennium Declaration. The new world order cannot be built on a cold war mind-set characterized by confrontation and economic blockade. There is no place for that in today's world of cooperation and free trade. Namibia therefore reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the unjust and unprovoked embargo imposed against Cuba. It is in this context that my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", which is before us today.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to propose that, in the absence of objection, the list of speakers in the debate on this item now be closed.

It was so decided.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, as contained in document A/58/287. We also welcome the Foreign Minister of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque.

My delegation regrets the fact that we again have to address the item on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Peaceful coexistence between and among nations requires that all civilized States observe international law. In this regard, the international community has repeatedly and consistently called for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba, and South Africa reaffirms its belief that that is the right thing to do. Those measures have caused untold suffering to the people of Cuba. It is therefore no wonder that the overwhelming majority of Member States are here today to continue to rally support for the draft resolution before us.

At the thirteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Kuala Lumpur in February, leaders expressed their rejection of unilateralism, which is increasingly leading to the erosion and violation of international law. They also expressed their firm opposition to coercive and unilateral measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries, as such measures are contrary to international law, including international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States. The heads of State or Government also again called upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the Charter, international law and the principle of good-neighbourliness, is causing huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

The heads of State or Government further expressed deep concern about the widening of the extraterritorial character of the embargo against Cuba and the continual new legislative measures geared towards intensifying it, which clearly contradict the expressed will of the international community.

My delegation fully associates itself with the views expressed my many speakers, and calls upon all countries to reject the unilateral, extraterritorial measures imposed against Cuba, as they stand in stark contrast to international law, which guides all civilized States. My delegation also firmly believes in a strong multilateral system, based on clear and mutually accepted rules and principles, in which small and big nations are treated as equal sovereign States. The United Nations Charter embodies the vision, mission, principles and obligations that all signatories to the Charter must abide by. South Africa views the continued imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba as a flagrant violation of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of foreign sovereign States, in this case Cuba.

We are guided by the basic norms of international conduct in our principled support for the need to eliminate economic coercive measures as a means of political and economic compulsion.

In line with previous United Nations resolutions on this item, among others, South Africa believes that constructive dialogue can foster mutual trust and

understanding, as well as engender harmony and peaceful coexistence between the two nations. Furthermore, we welcome attempts by all countries aimed at easing the economic strangulation of Cuba and at contributing to an improved quality of life for the people of Cuba.

South Africa will once again support the draft resolution to be considered by the General Assembly under this item. This, we believe, will be our humble contribution to the rule of international law and the strengthening of multilateralism.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): Tanzania is addressing the Assembly once again this year to join the international plea to the United States of America to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is entering its forty-fifth year. This is the twelfth successive year that the item is being deliberated in this Assembly.

The imposition of the embargo against Cuba over four decades ago seriously violates not only the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law, but also the freedom of international trade. The situation was made worse by the passing of the Torricelli Act in 1991 and of the Helms-Burton Act in 1996, meant completely to isolate Cuba from international trade.

The extraterritoriality of the embargo, as institutionalized by the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, in addition to breaching the sovereignty of third-party States as well as international law, has caused further severe damage to the economy of Cuba over the past 10 years. The effects are damaging to trade relations between Cuba and third-party nations and their private companies. The embargo has seriously affected Cuba's economic and social sectors, and it is estimated that in the past 44 years Cuba has lost more than $72 billion. We pay tribute to the dignified resilience and courage of the Cuban people in facing, and bracing against, these punitive measures.

We have expressed concern at the adverse effects of the economic embargo on the Cuban population, particularly its most vulnerable segments. One of the sectors hardest hit is the agricultural sector, whose development is key to food production and hence to the nutritional standards of the Cuban people. The embargo has generated conditions that lead to hardships for ordinary people. This is a violation of the Cuban people's right to food — one of the fundamental rights provided in various international Conventions on human rights. The embargo measures affect imports of food — products destined for the Cuban population, for both consumption in homes and social consumption in schools, senior facilities, hospitals and day-care centres.

It is very encouraging and praiseworthy to note that, despite all these odds, and under very difficult conditions, Cuba has managed to develop world-class health and educational systems, which it has generously shared with other developing countries. My country, Tanzania, has benefited from the excellent training in those fields provided to many Tanzanians over the years. Those world-class accomplishments have survived and flourished despite the very high costs of the embargo inflicted on Cuba. It is our conviction that Cuba's achievements in the fields of health and education would have been greater if no embargo had been imposed and that Cuba would have become a more prosperous nation.

The wholesale nature of the embargo, its longevity — over four decades — and its indiscriminate effects on infirm and innocent citizens, young and old alike, raises moral and ethical concerns over the issue of sanctions. The embargo has created a permanent state of siege and of belligerency, which forecloses meaningful options for resolving the issue. Coping with and surviving the embargo has become the singular preoccupation of the entire nation. We believe that the untried path of easing the sanctions and embarking on a dialogue could end the persistent stalemate and bring a new logic to an international environment, dominated by the politics of confrontation.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has consistently called for the lifting of the economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba, and its position on the issue remains unchanged this year. Again, we appeal to all States to refrain from applying laws and measures and to lift such laws which infringe on freedom of trade and navigation, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Tanzania will once again vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Necessity of ending the

economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Allow me at the outset to endorse fully the statement made by the representative of Morocco, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77, whose position my country is in full agreement with. With respect to the embargo against Cuba, our position has been one of steadfast and firm rejection of the application of coercive measures in contravention of the fundamental principles of international law and, in particular, in violation of the provisions enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as stated in plenary this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque.

My country, Venezuela, over the 12 years that the General Assembly has been considering this item, has time after time voted in favour of resolutions asking for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba, and, on this occasion, will reiterate its position.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, like most of the States Members of the United Nations, completely rejects the promulgation and application of laws and regulatory provisions with extraterritorial effects, because they violate the sovereignty of other States and run counter to the legitimate interests of juridical entities and of the natural persons under their jurisdiction and have a negative impact on the freedom of international trade and navigation.

Venezuela takes the view that the application of national laws and regulatory provisions such as the Helms-Burton or the Torricelli Acts, given their extraterritorial effects, adversely affects the sovereignty of States and constitutes a flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. We have seen with growing concern how those measures have been intensified and how their extraterritorial application has widened. My country therefore requests, through the worthy intermediary of the Secretary-General and of the President of the Assembly, that the necessary measures be adopted to repeal those measures and to render them null and void.

In accordance with that position, we have supported declarations adopted at a variety of international forums, such as the Ibero-American Summit, the Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of 15 and the Group of 77, inasmuch as illegal and discriminatory measures such as those that have been applied against Cuba produce effects harmful to the Cuban people. Moreover, they seriously jeopardize multilateralism.

The international community has consistently repudiated such extraterritorial laws, which infringe on the sovereignty of other States, which in turn maintain diplomatic, trade and all other kinds of ties with the Cuban Government. This is incompatible with the principle of the sovereign equality of States, because illegal measures of this kind impede the social and economic development of the Cuban people, striking hardest at the most vulnerable among them, such as children and the elderly. By the same token, they also adversely affect housing, education and health and food programmes, to mention just a few of the social sectors involved.

In conclusion, we believe that conflicts and problems between States must be resolved through constructive dialogue and negotiation designed to foster confidence, peace and integration in the region. We have, as I have already said, once again decided to vote in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.4.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter is one of the most important obligations incumbent upon members of the international community in order to promote brotherhood, cooperation, justice and equality among States and respect for the choices of peoples. Thus, the international community should have evolved beyond the stage when the law of the strongest and most dominant prevailed and should have reached a stage where human development is measured by respect for the law and for the rights and choices of others.

For the twelfth consecutive year, the General Assembly is considering the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Over the course of those 12 years the Assembly has constantly reiterated its belief in the right of peoples to self-determination — by adopting draft resolutions like the one before us — and has made an appeal to all States not to accept or implement unilateral national decisions with negative extraterritorial effects, which are a clear violation of the principles of international law.

Today, we are once again considering agenda item 29 on the need to end the embargo against Cuba.

The General Assembly voted in favour of resolution 57/11 last year, with 173 votes in favour, which reflects a growing awareness of the danger inherent in unfairly imposing sanctions against Member States. In addition, we can see that danger in their harsh effects on all aspects of life and infrastructure in the countries concerned.

One can imagine the damage inflicted upon Cuba over the past four decades and the unspeakable suffering that is daily visited upon its people, who have been deprived by the embargo of even the basic necessities.

My country has also suffered from unilateral sanctions like those imposed on Cuba, imposed by the same country. That country has renewed its sanctions against Cuba for another year. Furthermore, other countries suffer from the same unwarranted policies, most recently the brotherly State of Syria, which is threatened with the imposition of sanctions.

Our position on this issue is principled and firm. We are against policies of exclusion and coercion, and imposition of hegemony upon other peoples.

Finally, we appeal to all States to vote in favour of the draft resolution introduced by Cuba on this item, thereby strongly rejecting these unilateral acts, which are undoubtedly a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Kazemi Kamyab (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me start by expressing our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/58/287) and by expressing my deep disappointment over the ongoing embargo against that country.

The use of unilateral measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries has been condemned by decisions and resolutions of various bodies of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The international community should become more vocal about the need to repeal such measures and prevent similar actions.

The adoption and application of unilateral coercive measures impedes full achievement of economic and social development by the populations of the affected countries, particularly children and women. It hinders their well-being and creates obstacles to sustainable development and the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right of all individuals to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being and their right to food, medical care and necessary social services. It must be ensured that food and medicine are not used as tools for political pressure.

Resort to unilateral economic coercive measures jeopardizes the legitimate economic interests of the targeted developing countries. The United Nations system and other relevant international and multilateral organizations are redoubling their efforts to create and strengthen a conducive international economic environment capable of providing equal opportunities for all countries to benefit from international economic, financial and trade systems. It is also necessary that the international community consider ways and means of compensating the losses of targeted countries caused by those who resort to such unilateral measures.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Guinea fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We also note with regret, as other Member States have, that the item that we are dealing with this morning has been a fixed item on the General Assembly agenda for more than a decade. However, the international community's position on the matter is clear. The constancy and the solidarity that have characterized it throughout the years are symbolic of Member States' strong opposition to the unilateral embargo imposed on Cuba. Bearing eloquent witness to that position is also the fact that 173 countries voted in favour of the resolution at the last session of the General Assembly.

This is an occasion for me to reiterate my country's unswerving commitment to the principles of the Charter that enshrine the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as freedom of trade and international navigation.

It is our belief that disputes among States should be resolved through dialogue and negotiation on the basis of mutual respect and the principle of equality.

My delegation believes that promulgating and enacting extraterritorial unilateral coercive measures is

unacceptable. For that reason, it reiterates its solidarity with the Cuban people and expresses its profound concern over the persistence of legislation that jeopardizes both the letter and the spirit of the Charter.

My country, which is linked to Cuba by excellent ties of friendship, regards the lifting of sanctions as extremely urgent in order to relieve the suffering of its people, particularly children, women and the elderly.

As in previous years, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Mpundu (Zambia): My delegation has taken the floor to express Zambia's view on this annual draft resolution on the subject of the Secretary-General's report, namely the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/58/287). The report has provided a clear and objective analysis of the negative impact arising from the blockade. This embargo has aggravated the plight of ordinary Cuban people, especially vulnerable groups such as children, women and the elderly.

Over the years, this Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions demanding the lifting of the economic embargo against Cuba, with the overwhelming support of Member countries. Zambia's foreign policy is based, inter alia, on the principles of international law governing relations among States, the self-determination of peoples, non-interference in the affairs of other States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the threat or use of force in the international relations, the legal equality of States, international development cooperation and the search for international peace and security.

My Government does not support the use of coercive measures as a means of exerting pressure in international relations, as the use of such measures is contrary to the practice of international law and the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations. The Government of the Republic of Zambia has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the imposition of economic or political sanctions that do not have the blessings of the Security Council and any other measures that are not sanctioned by the General Assembly. It is for that reason that Zambia is opposed to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba 40 years ago.

Zambia believes that the embargo against Cuba is a breach of international law and a departure from the principles of the Charter. We also regard the extraterritorial nature of the Helms-Burton Act as an infringement on the territorial integrity of States. It is also an impediment to international navigation and free trade, as embodied in the World Trade Organization Final Act. The principles of free navigation and trade are welcomed by all freedom-loving nations.

Zambia's relations with Cuba are based on mutual respect and the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs. My Government, therefore, calls upon this Assembly to support this draft resolution, which is designed to enhance the social and economic development of the Cuban people.

As a landlocked developing country, Zambia has consistently affirmed the right of access of both landlocked and transit countries to and from the sea by all means of transportation, in accordance with international law. In pursuit of those lofty objectives, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its support for the draft resolution. Accordingly, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. Our vote will be based on our adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, my delegation once again appeals to all Member States to support the call for a complete lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Lifting the embargo will go a long way towards strengthening freedom of trade and of navigation in the Caribbean and in other areas of the world, and in particular towards alleviating the suffering of the Cuban people.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Once again the General Assembly is considering the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", despite the vast number of resolutions adopted by many regional and international bodies, including the General Assembly, and despite the fact that the United States should have implemented those resolutions.

But the reality is quite different. We all can see that the laws governing the embargo against Cuba are being enhanced and expanded, especially the Helms-Burton Act, which prohibits all entities and third countries from engaging in free trade with Cuba.

The United States of America has imposed embargoes not only on Cuba but on many other countries as well, including Libya, in an attempt to force those countries to follow policies that run counter to their own choices and convictions. The embargo against Cuba has had an extremely adverse impact, in particular in the area of health care. But that has simply helped to strengthen the determination of the people of Cuba to build their country and to defend it.

The policy of drawing up lists of so-called outlaw or rogue States should be denounced quite firmly. The embargo policies that have been imposed by the United States against many countries, which stand in the way of freedom of trade and navigation, are detrimental to the people of targeted countries — including the American people. It should also be borne in mind that the United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has the responsibility to lift the commercial, financial and economic embargo against Cuba and other countries. The embargo has been repeatedly denounced by the international community, given that it contravenes all relevant treaties and provisions of international law.

The Charter of the United Nations and international law lay down mechanisms for the resolution of disputes among countries. My country hopes that those two neighbouring countries — Cuba and the United States — will find a peaceful solution to their disputes. States want to see the dispute resolved by peaceful means, as repeatedly called for by the international community and by regional organizations, as enshrined in the provisions of international law.

Indeed, it will not be possible to establish global peace, restore friendly relations among countries or promote development in the absence of international cooperation based on mutual understanding and respect for the sovereignty and political and economic choices of all countries, large and small.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): My delegation would like at the outset to associate itself with the statement made by the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation is taking the floor once again this year to express our concern over the continued economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Since 1991, when a resolution on this item was first adopted at the forty-sixth session, successive General Assembly resolutions have continued to give further support, with an overwhelming majority calling on the United States to end the embargo against Cuba. The United States has yet to heed the wishes of the international community.

My delegation concurs with the view that Member States have the right to adopt policies of their choice to promote their own national interests. My delegation firmly believes that, in the conduct of relations among sovereign nations, we should uphold international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Millennium Declaration, while reaffirming the sovereignty of all States, called for an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system. Embargoes run counter not only to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations but also violate fundamental principles of international law.

My delegation considers that normalization of relations between the United States of America and Cuba through dialogue and cooperation is in the best interest of the peoples of both countries. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the recent move by the United States Congress to lift travel restrictions on United States citizens who wish to visit Cuba. My delegation views it as a step in the right direction and hopes that increased interaction will promote better understanding among the peoples of both countries and eventually lead to the lifting of the embargo.

The Government of the Union of Myanmar continues to maintain its consistent policy of strict adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the view that the promulgation and application by Member States of laws and regulations whose extraterritorial effects affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and freedom of navigation, violate the universally adopted principles of international law.

As a reaffirmation of our consistent policy, my delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.4, submitted by Cuba.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): Like many others who have spoken before me, my delegation firmly rejects the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impacts and all other forms of coercive economic measures — including unilateral sanctions

against Cuba — and reaffirms the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. Zimbabwe emphasizes that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten freedom of trade and investment.

We therefore call on the international community neither to recognize such measures nor to apply them. In the spirit of fostering North-South relations, we underline the need for developed countries to eliminate laws and regulations with adverse extraterritorial effects and other forms of unilateral economic coercive measures, which are inconsistent with the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the multilateral trading system.

Zimbabwe will vote in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/58/L.4).

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Charter of the United Nations, in its principles and purposes, reaffirms the right of States to exercise sovereignty over their territory and to non-interference in their internal affairs. All Members of the United Nations — particularly the great Powers — are obliged to respect the Charter, which is the Organization's constitution and its first and last frame of reference. The embargo that has been imposed on Cuba for more than 40 years has caused all kinds of economic, social and political damage to that country. It has deepened the suffering of the Cuban people — particularly children and the elderly — and it has negatively affected the Cuban people's tireless efforts to achieve well-being and prosperity.

My delegation appreciates Cuba's constant endeavour to conduct a constructive dialogue with the United States to settle all differences between the two parties on the basis of equal sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of both States and respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principle of good-neighbourliness. My delegation believes that the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba would serve the interests of the peoples of both countries.

The international community's increased support for the necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba is an affirmation of the need to respect the political, economic and social systems chosen by people as an expression of their will and in the light of their national interests. In that respect, we should like to draw attention to the positions of the heads of State and the presidents of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China calling for an end to the embargo against Cuba. My delegation hopes that all forms of sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba will be lifted, including the new legislation that has expanded the embargo under the Helms-Burton Act. We hope that the international community's voice will be heeded by the Government of the United States.

Therefore, the Syrian Arab Republic will vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/58/L.4) submitted to the General Assembly today.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Since the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Member States have increasingly rejected the deployment of unilateral trade measures by any Member State to attempt political reforms in another Member State. Given that fact and the events of the past few years, my delegation sees no reason to believe that there will not be a resounding rejection of the unilateral embargo against Cuba during the fifty-eighth session. In our view, we must collectively find a way to bring that unfair embargo to an end. Within the United Nations, Member States and relevant organs and agencies continue to ask for that step to be taken, and it is the right step to take.

We are of the view that embargoes imposed through unilateral trade measures run counter to the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and must therefore come to an end. In our view, the economic blockade against Cuba violates the right of every Cuban man, woman and child to life, to well-being and to development without distinctions of any kind. Indeed, it is known that among the hardest hit are the children of Cuba. The embargo — which extends to food, medicine and other forms of humanitarian aid — is extreme, discriminatory and prejudicial. It has inflicted the most pernicious economic damage on the nation and multiplied the difficulties of the Cuban people; it cannot be defended under the pretext of trying to protect those same people.

In the light of that continued and collateral damage, Indonesia calls for a review of the current policy in favour of one based on dialogue and negotiation — a policy that is more likely to receive

the backing of the international community. Indeed, we recognize that in recent years, the United States has granted some American companies licences to supply medicines and foodstuffs to Cuba on purely humanitarian grounds. While we welcome such developments, we cannot fail to believe that nothing will suffice but a complete removal of the embargo, with a view to permitting normal international trade. Giving medicine to a malnourished child when food would have prevented his condition in the first place is quite unfortunate and illogical.

Indonesia would like to reaffirm its commitment to respect for the fundamental principles of sovereign equality among States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation. We commend the international community's efforts to uphold those principles and to put an end to the unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Finally, therefore, in strong support of those and related principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the promotion of the freedom of trade, Indonesia will again vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/58/L.4).

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): More than four decades of economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba by the Government of the United States of America have gone by. The embargo still remains in effect and has been tightened even further. Moreover, it has caused great suffering among innocent Cuban people and continues to create needless tension between neighbouring countries.

In today's world, marked by many types of cooperation between and among States, it is disappointing to see the continued existence of unilateral discriminatory trade practices. As we see it, the extraterritorial application of the domestic laws of one country clearly runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter. In accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions, a Member State must neither promulgate nor apply rules, regulations or measures, the extraterritorial effects of which would harm the sovereignty of other Member States, as well as to free trade.

As a matter of sovereignty, each nation is entitled to participate freely in the international financial and trading systems. Mindful of the internationally recognized principles of national sovereignty, no country has the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of another, despite the fact that the other has a different economic and social system. As a sovereign and independent nation, the Republic of Cuba has the right to choose its own political system, as well as its own development model. To reduce poverty and achieve its sustainable development, Cuba should be empowered to maintain and promote trade ties with all countries of the world.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, together with the majority of Member States, shall continue to strive to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. This policy, unprecedented in international law, has thus far benefited neither of the two parties. The Republic of Cuba is a Member of the United Nations, and as Members ourselves, we must do all within our power to help that country regain its legitimate right to be a full-fledged member of the global economy.

It is in that context that my Government shall vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/58/L.4.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.4.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary,

Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Micronesia (Federated States of), Morocco

Draft resolution A/58/L.4 was adopted by 179 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions (resolution 58/7).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation, like the overwhelming majority of Member States of the United Nations, firmly rejects the United States embargo against Cuba and favours its repeal. Our position on this matter has been steady and consistent: at sessions of the General Assembly, the Russian Federation has voted in favour of draft resolutions calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

The Russian Federation believes that the continuation of the United States embargo against Cuba is incompatible with today's requirements or with modern international relations. It is a relic of the cold war that creates an artificial impediment to the establishment of a world legal order based on the provisions of the Charter and the principles of international law and justice.

Along with other States, the Russian Federation has thus repeatedly expressed its disagreement with United States attempts to tighten the embargo and to expand the extraterritorial implementation of the Helms-Burton Act. In our view, this Act is rightly described as discriminatory and contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and norms of international law, insofar as its extraterritorial effects impinge on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the generally recognized freedom of trade and navigation.

Favouring all realistic steps aimed at normalizing United States-Cuban relations, the Russian Federation notes with regret that the tone of American statements on key aspects of its policy towards Havana reveals that the United States continues to rely on the sanctions method for bringing pressure to bear on the Republic of Cuba. The Russian Federation is seriously concerned by United States attempts to strengthen the sanctions regime against Cuba and to exert pressure on third countries and various international organizations, with the aim of making them limit their cooperation with Cuba.

At the same time, we note with satisfaction the approval by the United States Senate of the legislation to ease travel restrictions on Americans seeking to visit Cuba. The Russian Federation is convinced that lifting the commercial, economic and financial embargo against Cuba would represent a major step towards normalizing relations between Havana and Washington, would be in the interest of the peoples of Cuba and the United States, and have a beneficial effect on the overall situation in the Central American and Caribbean region.

In keeping with the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and international shipping — referred to in the resolution — the Russian

Federation reaffirms its intention to continue furthering normal trade and economic ties with Cuba, based on mutual interest and mutual advantage, without discrimination or detriment to the legitimate rights and interests of the two countries.

Guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter concerning the inadmissibility of discriminatory measures or interference in the affairs of sovereign States, the Russian Federation deemed it necessary to vote at the present session as it has at previous sessions of the General Assembly, namely, in favour of the draft resolution (A/58/L.4) calling for the embargo to be lifted. We express the hope that the normalization of Cuba-United States relations, which the international community has consistently advocated, will enable the situation in the region to improve radically and enable relations between the United States and Cuba to develop on a basis of mutual understanding and close cooperation and in the interest of the well-being and prosperity of the peoples of both countries.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria and Romania and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland, declare that they align themselves with this explanation of vote.

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union with reference to the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (resolution 58/7). The European Union believes that the United States trade policy towards Cuba is primarily a bilateral issue. However, the European Union has to reiterate its opposition to the extraterritorial aspect of the United States embargo that has been implemented in accordance with the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

The European Union cannot accept that its economic and commercial relations with third countries be restricted through unilateral measures imposed by the United States on specific countries, in this case Cuba. Therefore, in November 1996, the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a regulation and a joint action aimed at protecting the interests of natural or legal persons from the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton Act.

It was encouraging that, during their summit in London in 1998, the European Union and the United States agreed on a package of measures involving, inter alia, agreement by the United States to suspend Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act and to not adopt any further extraterritorial legislation of that kind, as well as agreement on both sides to increase investment protection. The European Union trusts that the United States Government will continue to act in accordance with the commitments made.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba is clear and coherent with its principles. The Union adopted its common position on Cuba in December 1996, a position that is still in effect. The main objective of the European Union in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of peaceful transition to a pluralistic democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. We want this process to move forward as quickly as possible.

The European Union strongly condemns the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in Cuba. The increase in violations of human rights has raised an international wave of protests and condemnations and has increased the European Union's concern about the political situation in Cuba.

However, constructive engagement still remains the basis of the European Union's policy towards Cuba and we call upon the Cuban authorities to respond accordingly. The European Union urges the Cuban authorities to bring about speedy, lasting and substantial improvements in the situation, in particular with a view to ensuring the full respect for all human rights. In that connection, the European Union calls for the immediate release and full reintegration into society of all prisoners of conscience. We appeal to the Cuban authorities to cooperate fully with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

The European Union reaffirms its declaration made by the Presidency on 5 June 2003.

The European Union rejects the restrictions imposed on the embassies of most European Union member States by the Cuban authorities, which

constitute a de facto violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

On the economic side, the European Union considers that opening up of the Cuban economy to the outside world continues to be necessary. Economic growth is essential in order to address poverty alleviation in the country. In that respect, the negative consequences of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America and the severe limitations caused by the centralized economic system are working contrary to the economic development of the island.

For all those reasons and in spite of its serious criticism of Cuba, the European Union unanimously voted in favour of the resolution that has just been adopted.

Mr. Ishikawa (Japan): Japan shares the concerns expressed by many delegations today regarding the extraterritorial application of jurisdiction arising from the Helms-Burton Act of the United States, which is likely to run counter to international law. My Government has been closely following the implementation of the legislation, as well as the circumstances surrounding it, and its concerns remain unchanged. For this reason, my delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.4.

While Japan supported the draft resolution, it has some questions as to whether the United Nations General Assembly is in fact the most suitable forum in which to address the very complex issue of the United States embargo against Cuba. Japan believes that it is desirable for both countries to seek a solution through bilateral dialogue, and thus calls upon them to strengthen efforts towards that end.

Ms. Rivero (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation has the honour of speaking on behalf of the member countries of MERCOSUR, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay and the associated States Chile and Bolivia. As in past years, MERCOSUR and associated countries voted in favour of the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Our countries, faithful since the very inception of this Organization to upholding the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter, rejected the extraterritorial application of domestic laws that belittles the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs and assaults the sovereignty of States.

Disputes between States must be resolved through dialogue, solidarity and mutual understanding. Coercive measures are a last resort and can be used only in line with the parameters laid down in international law. The application of unilateral coercive measures contradicts the norms of international law, and at the same time hurts the interests of third countries, raises international tensions and weakens the fight against shared threats.

As emerges from the responses our countries have sent to the Secretary-General in connection with preparing the report requested in resolution 57/11, we are convinced that the application of unilateral coercive measures does not contribute to promoting the democratic system and respect and protection of human rights.

MERCOSUR and its associated countries have repeatedly rejected the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba in the United Nations General Assembly, as well as in other international forums, such as the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, the Ibero-American Summit within the Latin American Economic System and the Summit Conference of the Rio Group. The embargo also contravenes the juridical obligations incumbent upon members of the World Trade Organization.

For all of the foregoing reasons that our countries have joined in the virtually unanimous rejection expressed once again by the international community.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): Australia shares the widespread concerns about the state of human rights and political freedoms in Cuba, but we do not consider that isolating Cuba through economic sanctions is an effective means of achieving human rights and political reform. As a matter of principle, Australia has consistently expressed its opposition to the promulgation and application by Member States of laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects impinge on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interest of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and navigation. In Australia's view such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law and comity. Australia is therefore concerned about the

unilateral, extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 and has therefore again voted in favour of the resolution submitted under this item.

Mr. Paulovich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): During the previous session Belarus, together with the overwhelming majority of Member States, voted in favour of resolution 57/11 to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. At the same time, our delegation is concerned that, since that document was adopted, the situation has not altered substantially. The discussion of this matter at the Assembly's current session has given us an opportunity once again to confirm the commitment of Belarus to respect for the central principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and freedom of international trade and navigation.

Belarus has always favoured the abrogation of unilateral legislation by Member States the extraterritorial nature of which affects the sovereignty of other States, as well as the legal and financial interests within their jurisdiction and freedom of trade and navigation. In accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, Belarus has not applied, nor has it any intention of applying in future, any measures of that kind. My delegation believes that international disputes should only be resolved through negotiations on the basis of respect for the principles of equality and mutual benefit.

My Government is convinced that the conditions are ripe for the gradual resolution of the dispute between the United States and Cuba, and it calls upon the parties to step up their efforts in that regard. As this is our position, Belarus supported the draft resolution which was tabled for consideration before today's meeting of the General Assembly.

Mr. Strømmen (Norway): The Norwegian Government believes there is a clear distinction between unilateral measures, on the one hand, and sanctions adopted by the international community, through the United Nations, on the other. In our view, no country should impose its legislation on third countries. Norway has, therefore, once again voted for the resolution.

The embargo cannot, however, in any way justify the lack of civil and political rights in Cuba, and the current persecution of peaceful dissidents, writers and journalists that take place in that country.

The President: One representative has requested the right to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to intervene to express its surprise at the statements just made in explanation of vote by the representative of Italy, on behalf of the European Union and various associated States, and by the representative of Norway.

These statements are vivid proof of the European Union's hesitation in the face of United States pressure, and in asking Cuba what they do not dare ask the United States they betray their dependence and total hypocrisy. My delegation regrets the fact that Italy's statement went beyond the scope of the discussion on item 29, which is clearly spelled out on the agenda of the current session of the Assembly and, instead, moved into areas recalling the old, exhausted arguments of the past that for almost 45 years have served as the basis for the genocidal policy pursued by successive United States Administrations to bring Cuba down by hunger and disease.

The attack against the Cuban social order, which the Cuban people have chosen in free exercise of their right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence, is rejected by my delegation in the name of the more than 11 million Cubans who, notwithstanding blockades and semi-blockades, stand firm and hold up the banners of dignity and valour. Our people reject those fallacies and distortions, coming from the most reactionary and backward circles still suffering from outdated colonial-era syndromes which have been happily overcome for all time within Cuba itself.

In Cuba no one is arrested or tried for his or her religious beliefs or for voicing their opinions. The representative of Italy must know that those individuals he mentions worked for years as employees of a foreign and hostile Power, receiving specific instructions as to what to do and how to act, as well as material and financial backing from the United States Government and from extreme right-wing Cuban-American groups based in North American territory.

These individuals' sole objective was to subvert Cuba's domestic order and harm its economic, political and social system, with the goal of re-establishing the situation of dependency and subordination vis-à-vis the United States that it suffered under for over half a century.

The individuals in question blatantly violated Cuban law and acted on behalf of a foreign Power, thus contravening the most basic interests of their country by favouring its annexation by this foreign Power. The representative of Italy must know that those individuals implicated in those offences were tried by established courts, enjoying all guarantees and due process, in conformity with our Constitution and our domestic legislation. These individuals enjoyed full freedom to appoint their own attorneys and freely voiced whatever they wished to say in oral public hearings. They had the opportunity to call witnesses and produce evidence and benefited from their right to make their final statements as provided under the law. The punishments imposed upon those accused were in accordance with Cuba's Criminal Code, which guarantees the right to those accused to appeal before a superior court established for that purpose.

It is surprising to hear the distinguished representative of Italy show such keen interest in the full reincorporation of so-called prisoners of conscience within Cuban society, when the European Union has not shown any similar concern over the trial brought in Miami against five young Cubans for having fought against the terrorism occurring daily against Cuba from the United States, and who were sentenced to long and harsh sentences, including life sentences, following a spurious trial bereft of any such rights.

We still remember Favio di Celmo, a young Italian who died in 1997 as a result of a bomb placed in a hotel in Havana by mercenary hands paid by the very same terrorists. Yet despite the European Union's alleged concern for the lot of its nationals, it has never issued a declaration. It is regrettable that some member countries of the European Union should have endorsed the subversive provocative activities perpetrated by the United States Interests Section in Cuba, in pursuit of the hostile policies that this august Assembly has just now all but unanimously repudiated. These provocative and subversive activities are the ones that violate all the norms and conventions governing regulations between States, in particular the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961. The strong repudiation by the Cuban people of such actions is the basis for the repeated reference to this Convention by Cuban authorities when addressing representatives of the European Union.

My delegation regrets the path being followed by some members of the European Union in their ties with Cuba, not in terms of the dialogue they propose but in terms of their confrontational stance, including the suspension of cooperative programmes, an action taken by the Italian Government at the beginning of this year in a sort of laughable caricature of the United States blockade they had just claimed to denounce.

My delegation, together with other delegations gathered here, voices its full repudiation of the decision adopted this year by the European Union to suspend all cultural ties with Cuba. This not only adversely affects the Cuban people and their cultural efforts, but also keeps the peoples of the European Union from gaining access to an autonomous and vibrant culture which, despite over 40 years of isolation and blockade, has managed to maintain itself.

It is inconceivable that the European Union should have resorted to political indecision and obscurantism here at the threshold of the twenty-first century, when they talk about communication and dialogue among civilizations and the globalization of culture. The Cuban delegation reaffirms that, notwithstanding the well-known blockade and those lesser-known forms of blockade that others would seek to impose upon the Cuban people through coercive measures based upon a moral double standard and hypocrisy, the independence that has cost us so much to obtain and to keep, will be preserved and indeed strengthened even if this displeases certain reactionary and backward circles.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.